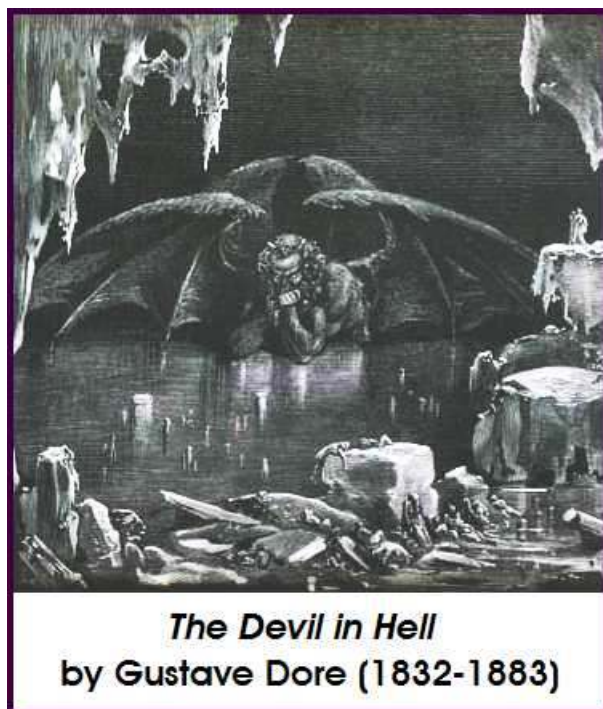


# Hell

Hell is the place of punishment for the souls of the damned. Artists often depict it as a huge cavern inside the earth, but it could actually be located in another universe or a different dimension. Whatever its location, it is ruled by the Devil, who is assisted by numerous demons in administering the various punishments.

Although the doomed souls in hell don't have physical bodies, they still feel real pain and experience real terror. This is because they are given the delusion that they do have real bodies, which are repeatedly mutilated, or continuously burned, yet somehow continue to survive. This method of punishment allows the tortures to go on forever, since a soul never dies.

Some medieval writers speculated about the possible ways in which these doomed souls are punished. The ideas included relentless flogging with barbed whips, continuous immersion in a vat of boiling blood, confinement in a pit of poisonous vipers, permanent impalement on a thick lance, and repeatedly being ripped apart and eaten by demons.



According to the Book of Revelation, the Devil will eventually be punished along with the doomed souls. Revelation 20:10 says that he will be thrown into a lake of burning sulfur, where he "will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Other biblical passages indicate that the Beast (Antichrist), the False Prophet, the demons, and all the doomed souls will also end up in this lake.

In some passages this lake of burning sulfur is called a "lake of fire", and artistic depictions usually show flames leaping up from its surface. Sulfur (also called brimstone) melts at about 115 degrees Celsius (240 degrees Fahrenheit), which means that the liquid sulfur in the lake is hotter than boiling water. People sometimes assume that this liquid sulfur serves as the fuel for the leaping flames. But unless there is an endless supply of sulfur, all of it would eventually be used up and the flames would die out. A more likely possibility is that the fires of hell don't need any fuel.

According to the traditional view, this lake of fire is at the center of hell, which is located in a huge cavern somewhere within the earth. Ancient stories suggest that such a cavern might be accessible by a long narrow passageway leading down from a hidden entrance on the earth's surface. However, the cavern could be hundreds of miles below the surface, or even at the center of the planet, far too deep to be reached by a passageway from above.

But hell might not be located inside the earth. It could be on another planet somewhere far across the universe. Or it could even be outside ordinary space and time, such as in a separate universe or a totally different reality.

People are saved from the torments of hell if they believe in Jesus and accept him as their savior. Even a serial rapist-murderer can be saved if he repents and accepts Jesus before he dies. Unfortunately, some people have gone through their entire lives without ever hearing about Jesus, and therefore didn't have an opportunity to be saved in this way.

Many modern Christians don't believe in the traditional hell of eternal tortures. They say that a loving and merciful God would never create such a horrible place. But others point out that Jesus himself warned about hell in passages such as Matthew 5:29 and Luke 16:19-31, and this proves that it really does exist.

**Note:** This article was originally published on the Gospel Mysteries website. To read more articles from this site, go to <http://www.archive.org/details/GospelMysteries>